

A group of diverse young children, including boys and girls of various ethnicities, are smiling and huddled together. The background is a bright blue wall. The text 'Welcome!!!' is overlaid in large white letters at the top. Below it, a blue-bordered box contains the text 'Thanks for Joining Us Today.' At the bottom, a semi-transparent grey box contains the text 'Please use chat to sign in with your name.' in blue.

Welcome!!!

Thanks for Joining Us Today.

Please use chat to sign in
with your name.



Executive Function Skills: “THOUGHTS” - Critical Brain Skills to Nourish, Flourish and Thrive



March 16, 2021

BrainWaves Live! Webinar Series

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Housekeeping for Webinars

- **This meeting is being recorded**
- **Be on video** if possible.
- **Use the chat** for questions and reflection at any time throughout the presentation.
- **Please mute your audio.**

- **Stay Engaged.**
- **Community Mindset.**
- **Speak Your Truth.**
- **Be Open to New Ideas.**

Let's Get Started!

Today's Topic?

Executive Function (EF) “Thoughts” Skills



POLL Time!

What do you think?

QUESTION

Which statement best describes you?

(please choose one)

- “I am sometimes late for appointments, meeting, etc.”
- “I struggle with completing long-term projects on time”
 - “If I get ‘stuck’, I may just quit the effort”
 - I get anxious when plans or schedules change”
- “I have difficulty following multi-step instructions”

Don't Worry You're Not Alone...

A glowing blue brain is held in two hands, one on each side. The brain is the central focus, with a bright blue glow. The hands are a light skin tone and are positioned as if holding the brain. The background is dark blue. The text is overlaid on the brain in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**You just need to
tune up your
executive
function
“thinking”
skills!**

Executive Function Traffic Controller Center

The **mental processes** that enable us to **plan**, **focus attention**, **remember instructions**, and **juggle multiple tasks successfully**, just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to **filter distractions**, **prioritize tasks**, **set and achieve goals**, and **control impulses**.

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University



**Basically
everything
we need to
get stuff
done!**



Executive Function Skills = 3 Buckets

Thoughts



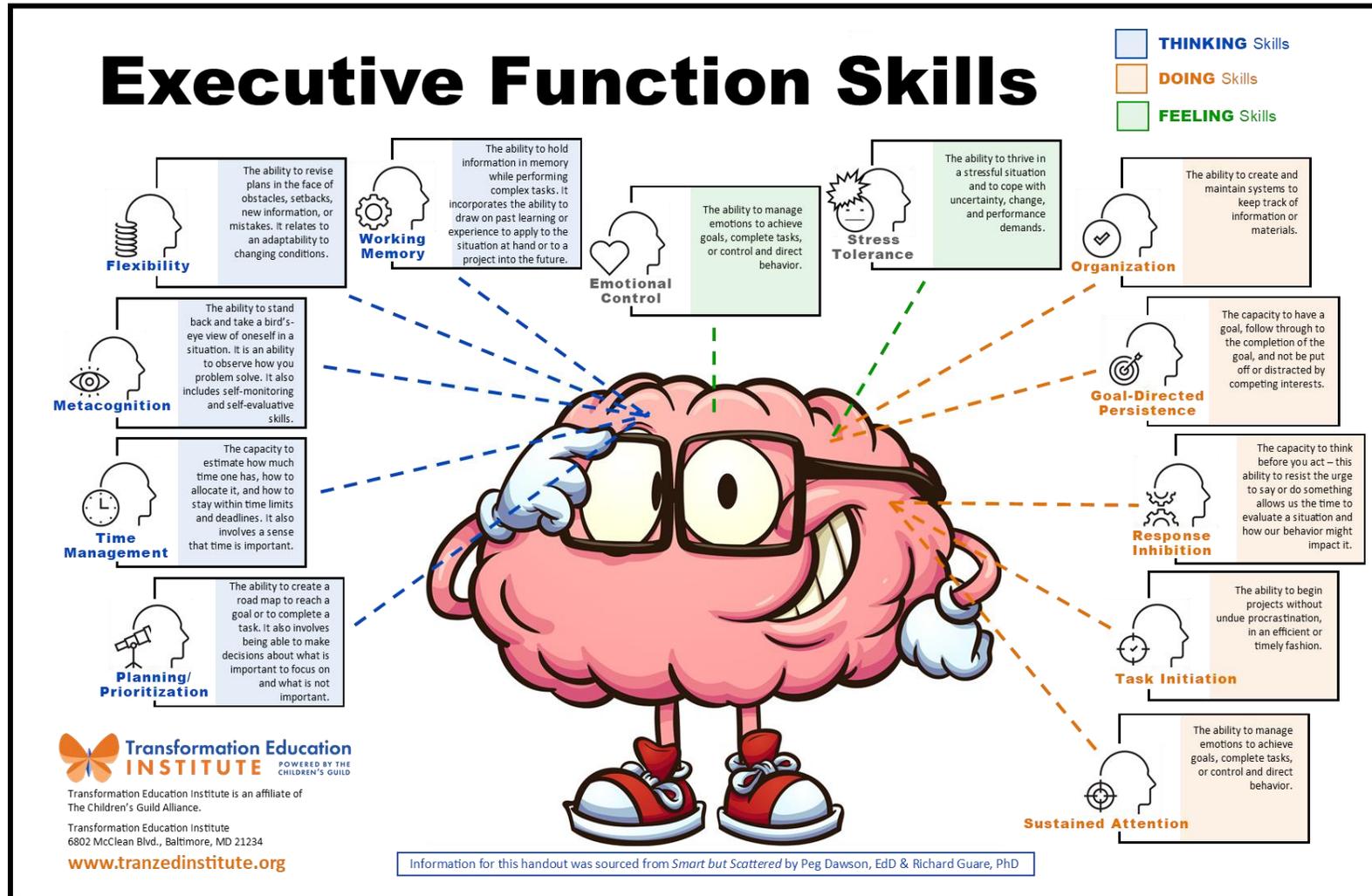
Emotions



Actions



Executive Function Skills Placemat



Visit our website to download your **FREE** copy.

Childrensguild.org

Brain Scientists Agree...

That **strong working memory, self-control, or self-regulation** and **the ability to maintain and shift attention** are the foundation upon which academic and social success are built.

Developed EF skills = unlock human potential

Deficits in EF skills = prevent us from living up to our personal best

Take Note!

Everyone is born with the capacity to develop **executive function skills**, which reside in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. They first begin to develop at **about 6 months** of age through environmental learning, including many in the first two years of life. Development continues throughout young adulthood, **to about age 30**.



Nature vs Nurture



Children who grow up in home and school environments that **nurture their ability to control impulses, make plans, remember things and stay focused** **tend to enjoy happier lives.**

Children who are born in **chaotic, unsafe, unpredictable environments** or are **exposed to traumatic events** **may develop brains that have ineffective EF centers.** Their brains become **wired for self-protection**, and they are **always on high alert for danger.**



Is Behavior Really a Choice?

- A child's ability to succeed is based on a capacity to **understand what is being required and regulate their behavior to meet that requirement.**
- When children's executive function is working smoothly and expectations are developmentally appropriate, **they develop a flexibility of thinking that supports follow-through or the acquisition of the skill.**

Is Behavior Really a Choice?

- When execution function is **delayed or impaired**, children are more likely to fail at, or miss, our message
- **They are more likely to function out of their fight-or-flight response**



Correct Behavior or Understand It?

- When misbehavior occurs, adults typically respond by **correcting the behavior rather than trying to understand it.**
- **Power struggle ensues.**
- Adult and child become **disconnected.**

Instead

- Use this opportunity to **build a relationship** with the child by trying to **understand what is motivating** his/her behavior.
- **Understanding the behavior builds empathy and connection** as well as opportunities for **constructive problem-solving.**

Address Challenging Behaviors with Effective EF Skills

Research has shown that **children with autism and related developmental disabilities** struggle with challenging behaviors because of **deficits in executive functioning skills.**

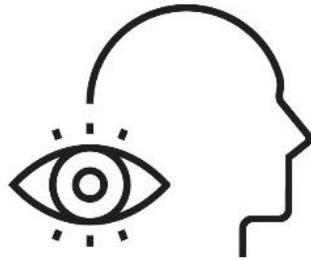
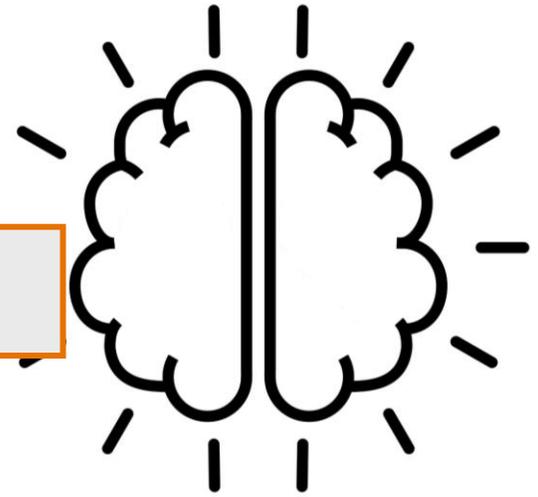
Amy Sippl: Life Skills Advocate

Thoughts

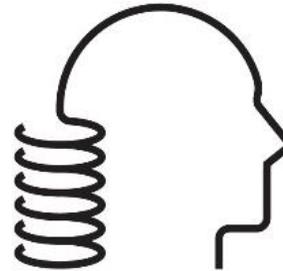


Thoughts Bucket

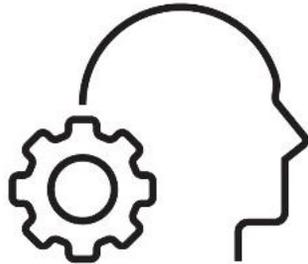
Includes Thinking Skills:



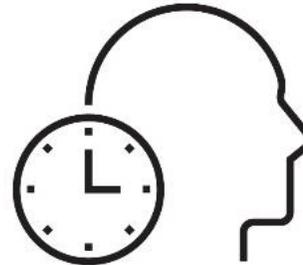
Metacognition



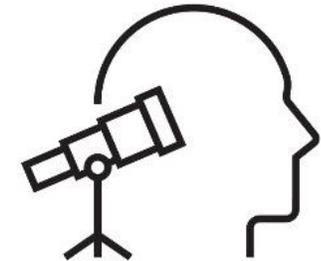
Flexibility



Working Memory



Time Management



Planning and Prioritization

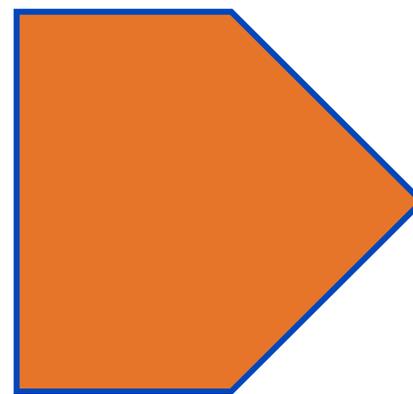
Have You Ever Heard?

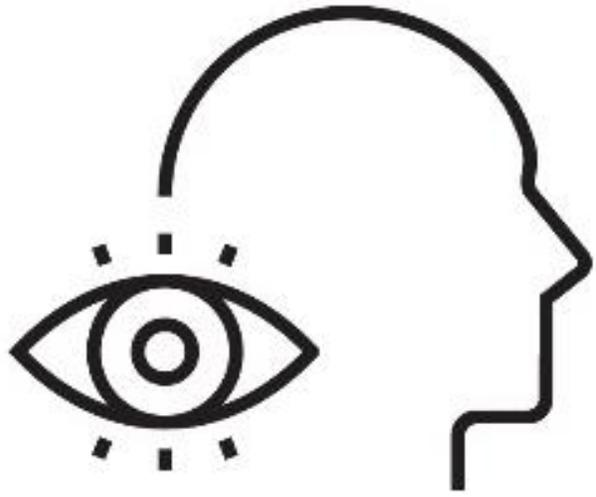
I CAN'T DO THIS!

I QUIT!

**I'M NEVER GOING TO
UNDERSTAND THIS STUFF!**

**Help kids
make the
transition
from...**





Metacognition

thinking about your thinking – **self-reflection**

METACOGNITION is the ability to think about your thinking.

Why am I stuck?

Research shows that the more children are taught to use metacognitive strategies **the more resilient and successful they become, in and out of school.**

Fixed vs Growth Mindset

“Thinking about our thinking creates perspective –
perspective that leaves room for change”

- Tamar Rosier, learning coach

- **Fixed mindset** view challenge with passivity: either I can or I can't but they can't affect the outcome. Fixed mindset develops negative self-talk in place of metacognition.
- **Growth mindset** view challenges as opportunities to grow: I can't do this YET

Metacognition is Great for Self-Regulation

- Development of metacognition skills **enable children to self-regulate when faced with challenges.**
- Awareness of their thinking **enhances their control over choices and viable resolutions to problems.**
- When children can self-regulate **they can manage situations that might have overwhelmed them in the past.**

Metacognitive strategies
teach students how to
DRIVE THEIR BRAIN!



Metacognitive Strategies

Explicit Teaching

Focus on activating prior knowledge, introduce new vocabulary and concepts, model the new skills, provide opportunities to practice the skills and build in reflection.

- ✓ Teach students to plan, monitor and evaluate their work.
- ✓ Model thinking – think aloud.
- ✓ Questioning:
 - *Open-ended questions – Can you tell me why you think that?*
 - *Non-blaming – Why do you think you got so upset?*
 - *Solution focused – How could you handle that differently next time?*

METACOGNITION Think Sheet

I'm thinking...

I'm wondering...

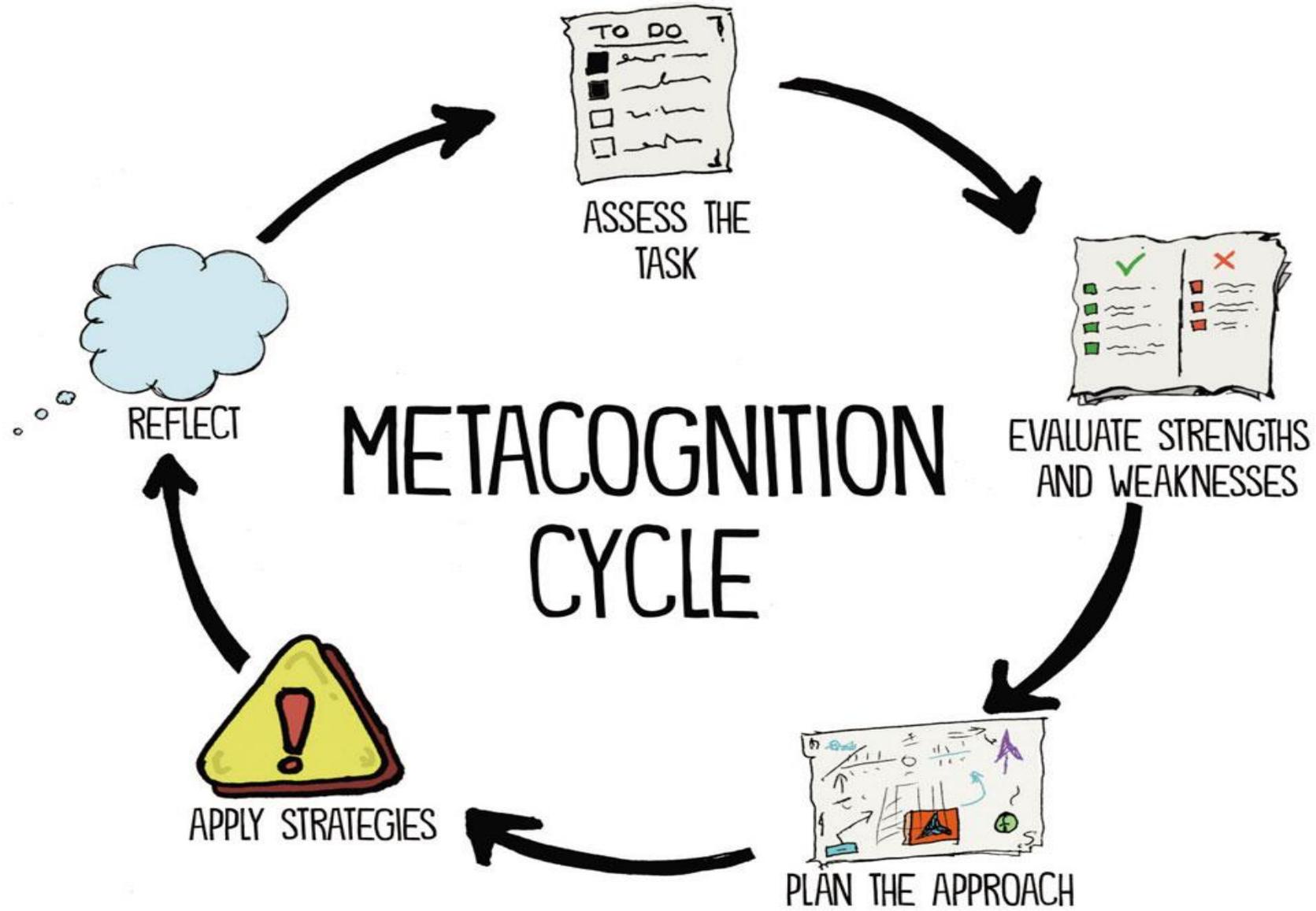
I'm noticing...

I'm seeing...

I'm feeling...

I'm understanding...

TeacherKarma.com



Metacognitive Approach

Before

1. Have I done something like this before?
2. Think about existing strengths + strategies
3. Set goals- what do I want to achieve?

During

1. Trial and error
2. Reflection- is the strategy working for me?
2. Can I change anything?
3. Am I meeting my goals?

After

1. What worked well?
2. Is there anything I can improve or alter
3. Embed into workflow
4. Apply to different tasks

D n A



diversity and ability

Does Your Child...

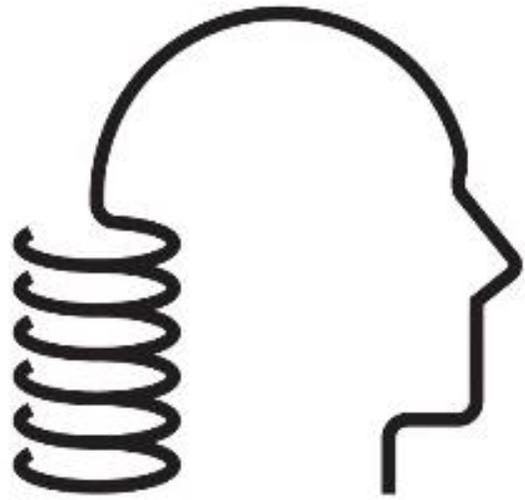
- ✓ Have difficulty accepting other people's ideas?
- ✓ Argue the same point over and over?
- ✓ Get frustrated when even the smallest of things goes wrong?
- ✓ Repeat the same mistake?
- ✓ Has difficulty following a new schedule?
- ✓ Gets anxious when plans change?
- ✓ Struggle to take on new, more complicated tasks?
- ✓ Have trouble switching from one activity to another?
- ✓ Get upset when others don't follow rules?

FLEXIBLE THINKING

**may be
the reason!**







Flexible Thinking

capacity to **think before you act**

FLEXIBLE THINKING is the ability to think about multiple things at the same time.

It is the ability to modify thinking based on a change in expectations and/or demands.

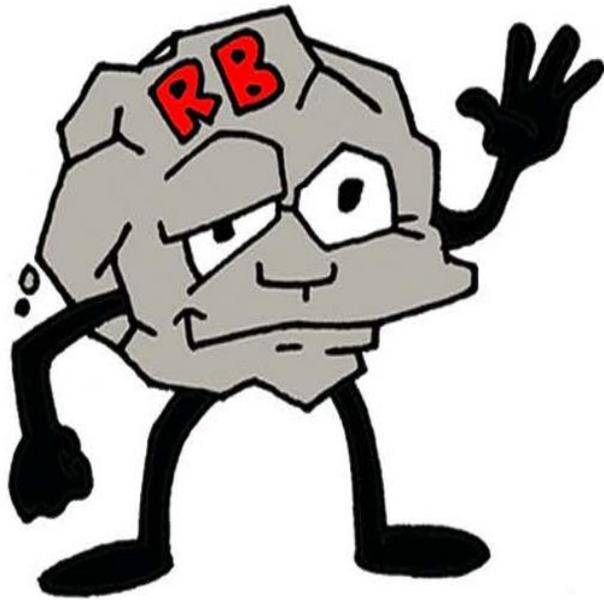
Children who struggle with flexible thinking tend to be very rigid thinkers – they get stuck on one idea, use the same strategy even if it isn't working, are not able to see things from different perspectives and have difficulty using various strategies to solve problems.

Flexible Thinking Strategies

- ✓ Break tasks down into smaller chunks so they don't get overwhelmed.
- ✓ Provide them with information in advance so they can plan how to respond.
- ✓ Talk about multiple scenarios of how to solve a problem.
- ✓ Model your thinking.
- ✓ Explicitly remind children of other strategies they should consider – strategy wheel.

Name one change that usually makes you feel upset.	Name one change that you are usually good at handling.
Name something in your life that you would like to change.	Name something that you would like to keep the same forever.
Name two ways you can deal with being upset about change.	Describe a time when there was a change that happened that you didn't like at first, but ended up being great.





ROCK BRAIN

He gets you stuck on your own thoughts, answers and solutions. He gets you to do only what you want to do, without thinking about the group.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO DEFEAT ROCK BRAIN:

Listen to your group's ideas:
be flexible

Agree to follow someone else's plan

SUPERFLEX™ and the Thinkables!

Superflex is the superhero that lives inside each of us and helps us learn to be more flexible thinkers! When we're doing or saying something that is socially "unexpected" one or more Unthinkables are invading our brains. We can call on our Superflex to help us use our superflexible strategies to defeat the Unthinkable and get back on track. As we get better and better at using our Superflexible powers to silence an Unthinkable's behavior before it occurs, Thinkables start appearing to help us keep doing that! Superflex and the entire team of Thinkables help citizens everywhere stay superflexible in their thinking as they interact with others at school, at home, and... everywhere!

Rox Flexinator - I help you be a flexible thinker so you don't get stuck on your own thoughts or plans.

Rob Tina - I help you stay calm and positive to stay in control and defeat your worries.

Space Respector - I help you pay attention to and respect other people's personal space bubbles.

Kool Q. Cumber - I help you stay calm (cool as a cucumber) when problems come up so you can see they are small and react with a small reaction.

Focus Train - I help you focus your powers so your brain can stay connected to what others are talking about or what you are doing.

Homeworks - I help you know the right time and right place to use humor.

Other-Side Sally - I help you remember that conversations are also about thinking about the other person or persons and finding out about them.

L.O.F. - I help you use your positive thinking so you can cooperate and be flexible during sports and games.

Stick-Wittem - I help you keep your body with the group and your shoulders turned toward the group.

Meditation Matt - I help you try to be calm throughout your day, so you can stop and think about making good choices.

Social-Lee Wonderer - I remind you to think about and use your social wonder questions so you can keep the other person interested during the conversation.

Nice Bryce/Bryce - I help you say nice, friendly words to others even if you don't feel like being friendly.

Tracker - I help you stay on the right track or topic the group is talking about.

Sunny Sam - I help you see the good things in a day and feel pretty good about your life so you can always show your "sunny" side to others.

Social Thinking™

I can deal with change by:



Drawing a picture about my feelings.



Thinking about how the change could be good.



Telling myself it will be okay!



Asking about changes ahead of time.



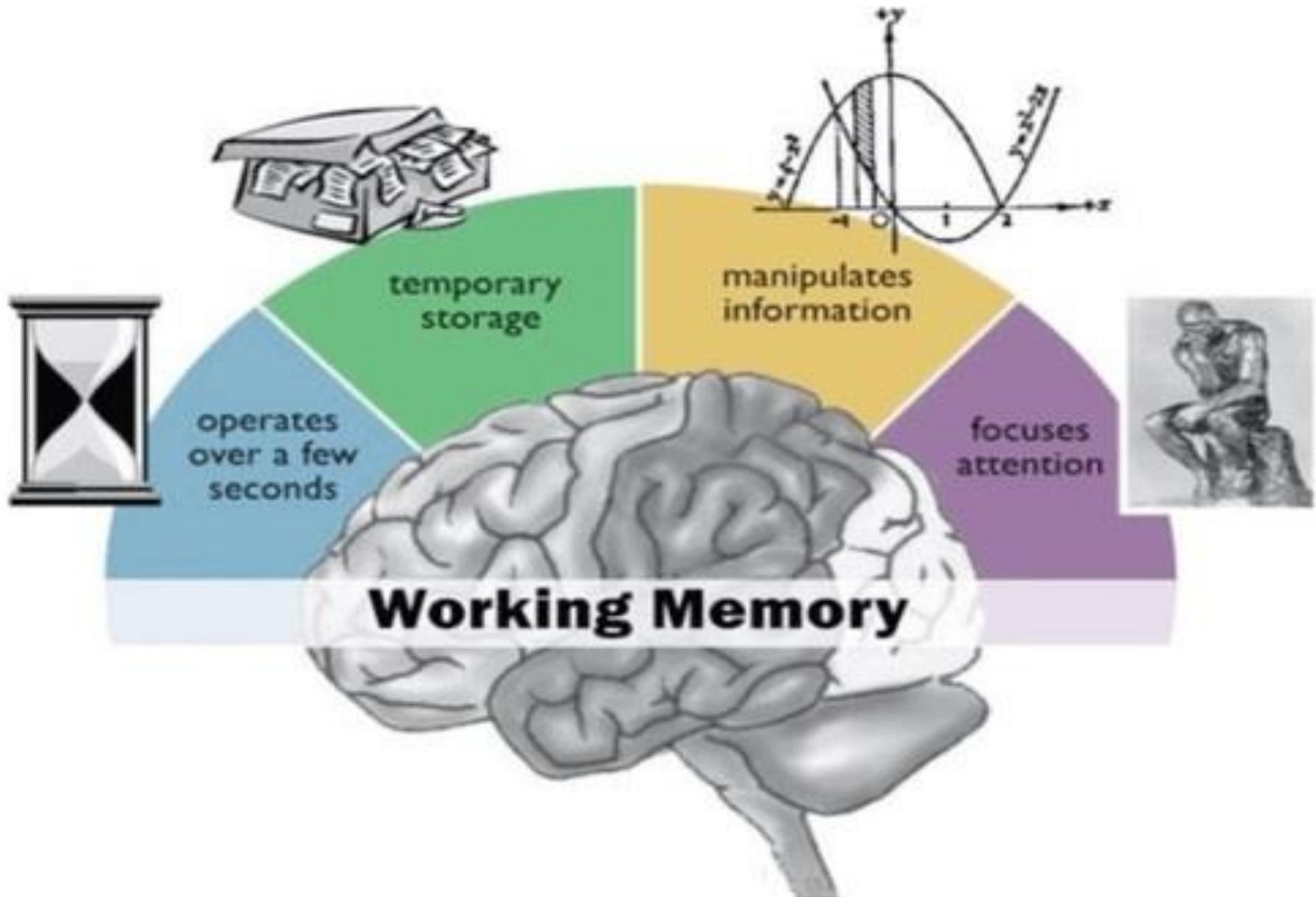
Talking to an adult.



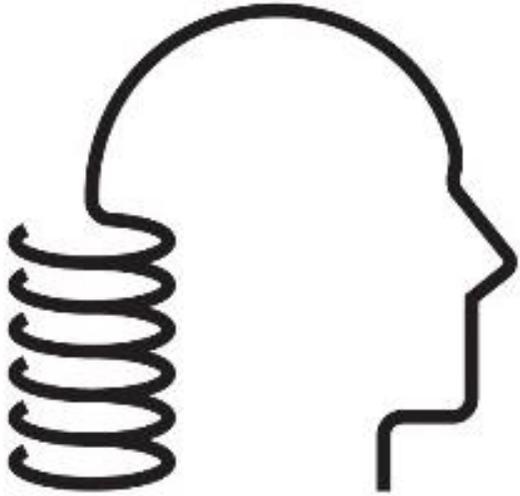
Taking deep breaths.

Do You...

- ✓ Have difficulty following multi-step directions?
- ✓ Need to re-read text?
- ✓ Have difficulty staying engaged in class/movie/discussion?
- ✓ Have test anxiety, especially on multiple choice tests?
- ✓ Have inconsistent performance?
- ✓ Have a need for more time and repetition?
- ✓ Have a lack of focus?



Working Memory



the ability to **hold information** while completing complex tasks

WORKING MEMORY is a system for temporarily storing and managing the information required to carry out complex cognitive tasks such as learning, reasoning, and comprehension.

“Unfortunately, working memory problems often go **undetected in the classroom**. They’re confused with poor motivation or failing to pay attention”

Gathercode and Alloway, Working Memory and Learning: A Practical Guide for Teachers, 2008.



Working Memory Strategies

- ✓ Visualization skills
- ✓ Have your child teach you
- ✓ Play games that use visual memory: Concentration, Simon
- ✓ Active reading: highlighting, sticky notes
- ✓ Use multi-sensory strategies

Amanda Morin: Understood.org

Visualization Activity

Identify an
object to
describe...



Working Memory Apps

According to *The Huffington Post*, “Nadine Kaslow, Ph.D., professor and vice chair at Emory University's Department of Psychiatry and President of the American Psychological Association:

“Apps can help promote mental health through participation in activities designed to reduce symptoms and improve psychological functioning.”

1. Lumosity

2. Eidetic

3. CogniFit Brain Fitness

4. Memory Trainer

5. Mind Games

6. Fit Brains Trainer

7. Portrait Health Brain Teasers

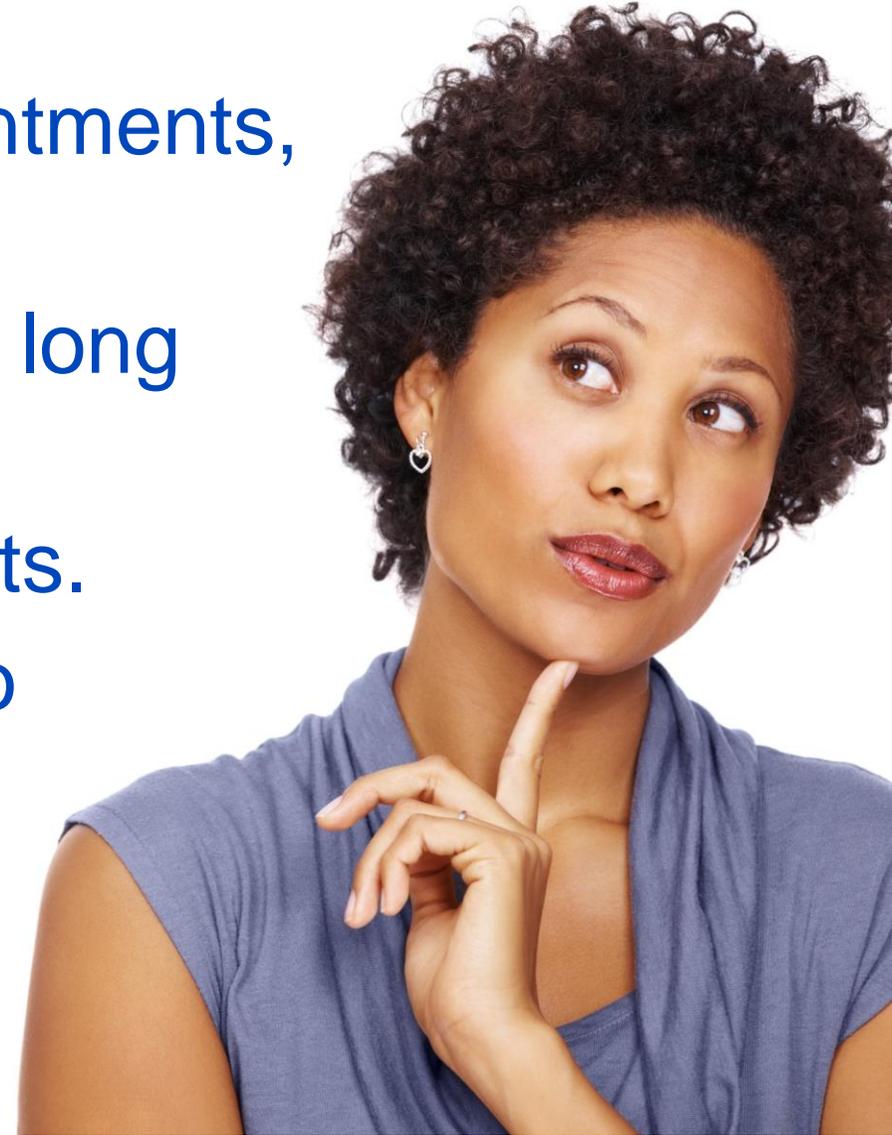
8. Coach Memory! Brain Trainer

9. Sudoku

10. *New York Times* Crossword

Does This Sound Familiar?

- ✓ You are frequently late for appointments, events, games/practices.
- ✓ You have difficulty guessing how long something will take.
- ✓ You have trouble finishing projects.
- ✓ You make poor choices in how to spend your time.
- ✓ You procrastinate.

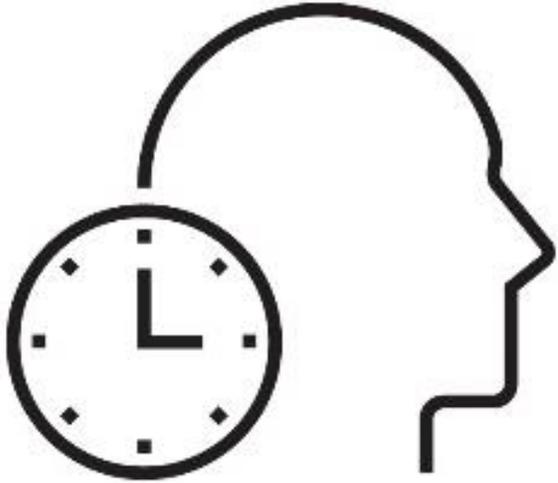


Do You Often Feel That You Don't Have Enough Time to Get Done All You Have to Do?

Time is one of the most precious commodities we have, and it's often in short supply. Between work, family life and education, it can feel like there just aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish everything on our to-do lists



Time Management



capacity to **estimate how much time** one has to complete a task and how to **meet deadlines**

TIME MANAGEMENT is having an accurate understand of time and making decision to complete task in a timely way.

What is Time Management

Includes being able to :

- estimate how long tasks will take,
- prioritizing,
- dividing time between tasks,
- pacing yourself,
- using time wisely, and
- working to meet deadlines.

Pathway 2 Success



Time Management

- Researchers identified that time management skills have a **direct correlation with academic, vocational and social success.**
- Deficits in time management can be underlying cause for challenging behaviors.
- Students with disabilities and diverse learning needs struggle with time concepts and have poor time management skills.

Interventions for Students who Struggle with Time Management

Clipart by Kate
Hadfield & Sarah
Pecorino



www.thepathway2success.com

Pathway
2 SUCCESS



Practice estimating
time to complete tasks



Make checklists and
prioritize tasks



Keep a daily schedule
posted



Use a visual timer
during working sessions



Practice what it means
to "pace yourself"



Give time warnings
before transitions



Teach, practice, and
discuss routines



Teach how to reflect
during work sessions



Identify and reduce
distractions



Practice strategies for
moving on when stuck



Teach how to maximize
downtime



Teach skills for staying
organized and tidy

Time Management Strategies

- Develop a daily schedule with dedicated homework and chore times – discuss priorities.
- Use strategies to stay organized and tidy.
- Practice making to-do lists together and ordering items by importance.
- Establish routines (for morning, after school, and bedtime).
- Avoid over-scheduling (kids and young adults need downtime to learn how to use their free time, too!).
- Model and practice estimating how long a task might take.

Do You Struggle With...

- ✓ Tracking your work, to do's and activities?
- ✓ Choosing to do less important/fun things first?
- ✓ Completing long-term projects on time?
- ✓ Becoming overwhelmed with the amount of work?

Time to **tune up** your executive function skills of **planning and prioritizing!**

Planning and Prioritization



the ability to **create a roadmap** to reach a **goal** or **complete a task**

PLANNING and PRIORITIZATION EF skill guides two tasks:

1. Prioritizing is what takes place when the brain distinguishes main ideas from low-relevance details.
2. Planning how to invest their time and effort.

Edutopia: Judy Willis, March 7, 2016

Try This...

Which Are Needs and Which Are Wants?

- ___ bottled water
- ___ hair cut
- ___ college education
- ___ visit to the doctors
- ___ peanut butter and jelly sandwich
- ___ Netflix
- ___ car

Wants vs Needs

Children should be taught **how to think about what they want most, to consider the resources they have available, and then to thoughtfully prioritize their lists to obtain those things of utmost importance to them.**



4 Step Process in Planning and Prioritizing

- **Step 1: Understand Each Task Completely**
- **Step 2: Rank Each Task**
- **Step 3: Set Deadlines (and Stick to Them)**
- **Step 4: Be Flexible**



Posted April 27, 2016 by AIU in [College Life](#)

Daily Schedule



High

Urgency

Low

Urgent,
Not Important

Urgent and
Important

Not Urgent,
Not Important

Not Urgent,
Important

Low

Importance

High

Adults and Children:
Find Your Strengths and Your
Weaknesses

GET TO WORK – **ALWAYS**
OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP,
BOOST & IMPROVE

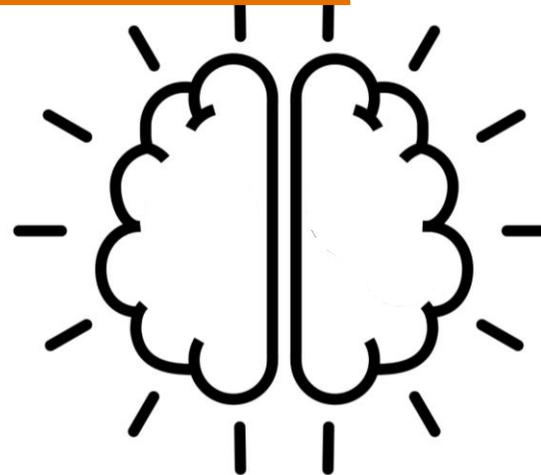
Flexibility

Metacognition

Time Management

Planning / Prioritization

Working Memory



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

Remember Our Poll?

Which statement best describes you?

The RESULTS!

- “I am sometimes **late for appointments, meetings, etc.**”
= **Time Management**
- “I struggle with **completing long-term projects on time**”
= **Planning & Prioritization**
 - “If I get ‘stuck’, I usually quit the effort”
= **Metacognition**
 - I get anxious when plans or schedules change”
= **Flexible Thinking**
 - “I have **difficulty following multi-step instructions**”
= **Working Memory**

**Change your
thoughts and
you change
your world.**

- Norman Vincent Peale

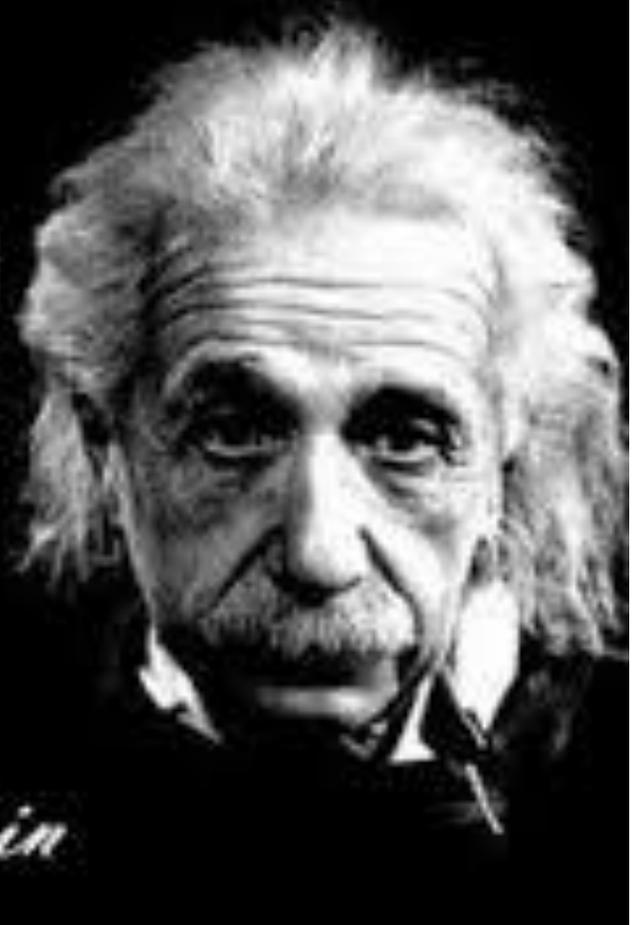


Think

- ✓ Remain flexible in your thinking.
- ✓ Seek new perspectives.
- ✓ Create order out of chaos.
- ✓ Take time to reflect.
- ✓ Invest your time and effort wisely.
- ✓ **Never stop learning!**

WE CANNOT SOLVE
OUR PROBLEMS WITH
THE SAME THINKING
WE USED WHEN
WE CREATED THEM

~ Albert Einstein



Visit the website for free resources:

- Today's **PowerPoint and Recording***
 - **Resources**

<https://childrensguild.org/webinars/>

*Webinar recording available in 7-10 days – you will receive notice via email when available.

Plan to join us for the April and May webinars
as we continue our journey into

Executive Function!

APRIL 21

Executive Function Skills:

“ACTIONS” -

Critical Brain Skills to Nourish,
Flourish and Thrive

MAY 19

Executive Function Skills:

“EMOTIONS” -

Critical Brain Skills to Nourish,
Flourish and Thrive

Questions or Comments?

info@tranzed.org

We want to engage as many people as we can in the greatest cause we can imagine: **the future of our children.**



Join the movement and be a Kids First Advocate. To learn more, visit the website: **kidsfirstamerica.org**

